

# THE QUAKER,

WITH WHICH IS PUBLISHED "CHORAL HARMONY."

A monthly Advocate of Popular Musical Education,

And Exponent of the Letter-note Method.

*All Correspondence and Advertisements to be forwarded to 20, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.*

NO. 69.]

SEPTEMBER 1. 1881.

[One Penny.

THE

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### TRAINES TO SING AT SIGHT

FROM THE ORDINARY NOTES.

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### The Tonic Sol-fa Notation.

FROM the correspondence now appearing in *Musical Opinion* on the subject of "The Tonic Sol-fa Notation and its defects," we extract the following letters in which our method of teaching is advocated or alluded to favourably:—

SIR,—I have read with much interest the discussion on this subject which has appeared in your columns. It is an important question, and I hope the correspondence will not close until the whole topic has been thoroughly sifted. As yet, however, it appears to me that the tonic sol-fa contributors have failed to grasp the real question at issue. I apprehend that the point debated is not, Can we train to sing at sight from the tonic sol-fa notation? Will the youthful, by its aid, make speedier progress than by the help of the staff notation pure and simple? Is tonic sol-fa cheap, easy, and popular? etc. But the real issue is, Can we not, by means of method and educational appliances, teach from crotchets and quavers as readily as from tonic solfa? Is it not a fact, that in the more advanced stages, the tonic solfa-ist works more laboriously than the old notationist, supposing both to have mastered their respective notations? Will not the existence of two distinct notations involve a host of evils which it is desirable to avoid? Let us look at these three propositions.

First, regarding the possibility of teaching as easily from the staff notation. I have looked in vain through the correspondence for any attempt to demonstrate the contrary: each contributor takes it for granted that tonic sol-fa gives him unique advantages, and therefore "the tonic sol-fa notation proves its reason to be." Now what are the facts of the case? We have at this moment several methods which, if properly taught, train as easily as tonic sol-fa. I can only allude here to the method, which I myself prefer, and therefore advocate—viz., the Letter-note—the oldest and best known of the systems which add the sol-fa initials to the ordinary staff notation. Some twenty years' experience has abundantly proved that the power of reading music in Letter-note "is acquired by young pupils quite as easily as by either of the new notations; and, once this power has been attained, a very slight effort is needed to dispense with the aid of the sol-fa initials—so slight, in fact, that young persons often accomplish it of their own accord, without help from their teacher." To these facts numerous teachers throughout the country can testify; indeed, many

of them hold that Letter-note is easiest, having the rising and falling notes to help the reader. To some tonic solfa-ists this may appear a wild assertion; I content myself, however, by asking them to examine the text-book for themselves, and then say whether, other conditions being equal—teaching power, learning capacity, etc.—they could not obtain from Letter-note results as good as those from tonic sol-fa. If so, the question at once arises, why use two notations if one will serve?

Secondly, with respect to the disadvantages of tonic sol-fa in the higher stages. Your correspondent, Mr. Wareham, has already pointed out one serious hitch—viz., the difficulties caused by the use, or rather the abuse, of bridge-notes. He has put the question before your readers very clearly, the only point in his letter calling for remark from me being the fact that the journal of our method had put similar views before its readers a month earlier. To this gentleman's arguments I may add that the use of bridge-notes is very likely to become abuse in the case of tonic sol-fa, and for this reason. Absolute truthfulness in anything is nearly impossible; but tonic sol-fa aims at absolute truthfulness, and almost unavoidably aims at it, because the notation says positively that a given passage is *do, re, mi, fa*, and will not permit to read it as *sol, la, ti, do*. Consequently, in order to be true to itself, the tonic sol-fa notation often uses bridge-notes where the singer does not need them, and where a change of sol-fa is a serious inconvenience, or even a fatal danger. Hence the appeals of tonic solfa-ists to those at headquarters, asking that "the singer's convenience ought more generally to be studied." But will the authorities grant this? I doubt whether they will; at all events they appear as yet to have cold-shouldered Mr. Rowan's suggestion to permit sol-fa to "overlap in difficult transitions," which contrivance has now been used in Letter-note for many years, in easy modulations as well as in difficult. Thus we have, on the one hand, a warm supporter of tonic sol-fa pleading for an advantage which he cannot obtain in his own notation; and, on the other, Letter-note pupils in full enjoyment of this advantage in connection with the despised and discredited old notation!

But this is only one of the disadvantages which the tonic sol-fa notation entails. There are many more, less important individually, perhaps, but helping to swell the disagreeable aggregate. In *Tune* besides the rising and falling notes, the staff notation aids by exhibiting the actual shape of every melodic twist, turn, and point of resemblance or imitation; and by preserving to

the eye similarities which exist in running passages, such as are common in Handel, where each group of notes, or pair of groups, is a precise copy of all the others. In *Time*, the staff helps by grouping quavers, semiquavers, etc., into aliquots or beats, easily distinguishable; and, as bearing on the same point, I take the following—strange to say from a tonic sol-fa publication (*the Musical Star*): the contention applies strictly to vocal music, although the article is on the subject of violin playing:—

"In like manner, in reading *at sight* a rapid passage in music, such as the following,



it is impossible to read every note by name. There is not time for that. The reader can only make a dash at it, glancing at the first in the phrase, then hastily following the form or outline of the notes on the stave to the last, thus getting a picture of the music on his mind, and while executing it may be busily employed in photographing what follows. That is impossible with the tonic sol-fa notation."

Passing over the chart which the staff provides in the case of a modulation—already dealt with by other correspondents—and merely reminding the reader of the advantages which the staff confers in studying any of those departments where absolute pitch is of vital consequence, such as just intonation, acoustics, etc., I shall indicate another point wherein the staff has the best of it, and one which I feel sure every tonic sol-faist will understand. In perhaps nine-tenths of the modulations found in ordinary music there is a longer or shorter portion which can be read in either key. Sometimes this portion consists of only one or two chords, but at other times it may extend over a whole phrase. Of such a case, Croft's well-known tune "St Matthew" contains a very good example: it commences in the key of C, and modulates to G at the end of the second section, but the vocalist can if he chooses read the whole of this section as in the key of G. Now, one charm of such a modulation is the fact that the performer or hearer can determine for himself the precise point where he may view the modulation as commencing, relegating the turning-point further and further back, and thus

imbibing fresh enjoyment as his familiarity with the music increases. This pleasure is permitted by the staff notation, which is not at all dogmatic in what it says here; retained by Letter-note, which initials the music for *both keys*, and gives the singer his choice; but denied by Tonic sol-fa, which in this respect is like a tram-car, as compared with a vehicle free to move in any direction.

In all the above-mentioned cases it will be observed that the staff notation has a direct and positive advantage. Against these the tonic sol-faist puts the simplicity which he supposes his notation confers. But, as already pointed out, every advantage derivable from tonic sol-fa is or can be obtained from the staff notation: why then, permit me to ask, does the tonic sol-faist insist upon introducing a new notation? And this query brings me to my third particular.

Thirdly, the evils which accrue through the use of two separate notations. By two separate notations I do not mean two phases of the staff notation, such as the ordinary unlettered staff and Letter-note; for the latter is as much "old notation" as is the fingered music printed for young pianists. I have never heard the piano-forte text-book styled a new "notation," and neither is Letter-note, which is in the same category. Tonic sol-fa, however, as everybody admits, is a distinct and self-contained notation the knowledge of which, although it may train the musical faculty, aids the learner not a whit as regards the symbolism of the staff. Now, the inconveniences which, sooner or later, are certain to arise through the use of two notations are pretty irksome considered individually, pretty numerous collectively, and taken in the gross are sufficiently obnoxious to warrant their being described as evils. Of these I shall allude to two. First, there is the inconvenience caused by a piece of music not being procurable in the required notation, which, whether it arises in the drawing-room or the concert-hall, is a musical disaster. A case in point occurred in September, 1878, when a choir was thrown out of a competition at Birkenhead through their inability to read old notation or to obtain Tonic sol-fa copies, occasioning no end of discords unprepared and unresolved. Such instances, I have no doubt, readers can multiply *ad infinitum*. But here is another from the *Tonic Sol-fa Reporter* of May last, in which a correspondent relieves his mind as follows:—"As an illustration of the unfair manner in which Tonic sol-fa is treated by the disciples of the old notation, I enclose you a circular sent out by our local auxiliary of the Sunday School Union. According to this circular, the holders of tonic sol-fa certificates are allowed certain privileges, but the music to be sung is supplied in the staff

notation *only*. If the choir were an adult one, there would be many sol-faists able to hold their own. But this is a children's service of song, and it is very unfair, as well as unwise, to get children to declare that they hold Tonic sol-fa certificates, and then supply them with music in a notation they are not supposed to be familiar with." Who, let me ask, is to blame here; a Sunday School Union which, having no money to spare, cannot afford to print the music in both notations, or those who have laid down new lines without foreseeing consequences?

Next, there is the question of economy—a department in which Tonic sol-fa is supposed to reign supreme. But this is not so, for apart from the fact that the cheapest music by far is to be found in old notation, from the shilling oratorio down to the penny warbler, a serious loss accrues or will eventually accrue, through the use of two notations. The following quotation will explain why: "Although two heads are better than one, two musical notations are not. If I issue a tune book of say a hundred pages, of which I expect to sell 10,000 in the new notation and a similar quantity in the old, I might sell the book at a shilling; but if I could print the whole 20,000 in the same notation, making a single edition of the whole, I need only charge the public 6d. to 8d. per copy."

Of course the tonic sol-faist may here argue that, but for his notation, the tonic sol-fa editions would never have been required, and fewer copies would have been sold. But this is looking at the wrong end of the question: if all tonic solfa-ists had been taught at first an easy staff notation method, they need have worked no harder, and they would have obtained their books cheaper. Moreover, the inexpediency of the double arrangement will appear more and more as musical education progresses, and will only arrive at its climax when, by means of one method or other, everybody is taught who is capable of learning.

Having endeavoured, Mr. Editor, to put the real question before your readers, I shall now ask our tonic sol-fa friends either to disprove my assertion that the staff notation (with liberty to use the educational aid of sol-fa initials when desirable) can be taught as easily as the tonic sol-fa notation; or else to admit this fact, and then justify the co-existence of the new notation, and all the disadvantages entailed thereby.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,  
D. COLVILLE.

20, Paternoster Row, June 3rd, 1881.

SIR.—The debaters on the tonic sol-fa side of this question argue on the assumption that it is impossible to teach sight-singing to the masses

except by the aid of their notation; and, therefore, as two notations are an evil, the evil must be tolerated on account of the good which results.

For example, "Q," in the third paragraph of his letter, admits that the existence of more than one notation is an evil, but excuses the evil on the grounds above mentioned. This, I think, is the main point of his argument, for the remainder of his letter simply attempts to prove that bridge-notes are exceedingly useful when they are of use! But if on this account we are to tolerate them when they are of no use, it is like a man who wraps up in a great coat in the month of July, and then excuses his proceeding by remarking "Ah, but see how warm it keeps me in the winter."

I myself use the Letter-note plan, which, after actual experience I can pronounce to be as easy and as thorough as tonic sol-fa.

Permit me to ask whether your sol-fa correspondents have fully considered the disadvantages which two notations must inflict? I very much doubt it.

On the other hand, the disadvantages of the tonic sol-fa in the higher stages are great and numerous. Mr. Wareham, in his first letter, has very well shown the difficulties which arise in the use—or abuse—of bridge-notes, and his remarks are well worthy of consideration.

Yours, etc.,  
J. ADLEY.  
The Park, Tottenham, June 6th, 1881.

To the above two communications, no reply appeared in the next (the August) issue of *Musical Opinion*. But that number of our contemporary brought the following thoughtful and well-written letter: as it comes from a wholly independent source, its testimony in favour of Letter-note and commendation of the specimens which we insert monthly in *THE QUAKER* are all the more valuable.

SIR.—It is indeed high time that the claims of tonic sol-faism, both as a new notation of music and as an interval language of the musical scale, were thoroughly examined and fairly stated. For, notwithstanding its undoubted success as a great educational power in teaching the principles of music, there are those who positively assert that *as a notation* it is "fundamentally wrong," "quite unnecessary," and as a *language of tonality* "absolutely arbitrary."

1. FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG. How? The answer seems very conclusive though concise: "Because it represents that which is essentially and immutably vertical by that which is

horizontal." Is not that, Sir, both a mathematical and analogical blunder? Is it not universally admitted that the musical scale is literally an acoustic ladder of an absolutely definite length, the harmonic "steps" of which are separated from each other by vertical distance? If so, where is the pictorial analogy between its inevitable ladder form and the horizontal letters of the tonic sol-fa notation. Surely the natural analogue of an acoustic ladder—a ladder that is only *heard*—is an optic ladder—a ladder that can be *seen*! But tonic sol-faism has set its notation at a right angle to its very modulator, and to the fundamental truths the modulator so well represents. It is evident, therefore, that the impeachers are right in this their first allegation.

2. QUITE UNNECESSARY. It is admitted that the staff notation is quite adequate to indicate, first, by its lines and spaces, absolute and fixed pitch; secondly, by its notes on them, relative duration; and, thirdly, by the vertical distance of its lines and spaces, at least approximate tonality. Unfortunately, however, the lines and spaces, though right in being vertically distant, are wrong in being equidistant. It is here where the staff notation is decidedly inadequate and deficient, however much it may be redundant in other details. Now absolute tonality can be shown to the eye by lines and spaces at certain distances from each other, and indeed the musical scale in all its forms and modes is not clearly understood until it is represented to the eye as well as heard by the ear. But, as a psychological truth, absolute tonality is only readily and fully apprehended by the mind of the learner through the *medium of mnemonics*—whatever these may be—whether used audibly or silently. It is this important truth which makes tonic sol-faism a veritable scale language—antique, unmusical, and arbitrary though it be—and which at once supplies the great defect of the staff, and is the *great central educational power* which has won for it a success and popularity which many old notationists wonder at, others envy, and others would fain deny or disbelieve. Facts, however, are indeed "stubborn things." They are not annihilated by a sneer at them, or by disbelief of them. It may therefore be unhesitatingly asserted that the *mnemonic power* and the *tonic principle* of the new notation are the educational truths in it that are absolutely indestructible, and which no amount of sophistry will ever be able effectively to hide. Abstract these, and there is nothing left but what may well be dispensed with—nothing left but what is incomparably better indicated by and on the staff already. But have "these" not been abstracted already, and added to the

staff? Yes, over and over again. We have had these two powers indicated by figures or letters above the staff, by figures or letters below the staff, by sol-fa initials adjacent to and rising and falling with the notes of the staff (as in the "letter-note" method), and even placed in the very centre of the notes themselves (as in the "union" notation).

Yet, strange to say, almost all your correspondents mention not these facts, as if they wished to tacitly ignore them. But why so? They cannot deny the powers of tonic sol-faism as a "language of interval." They cannot deny its educational value as such, except they are fortunate enough to be "fixed doists." They are above "interval reminders," or if they use them at all they can easily charge any sol-fa syllable with any amount of mnemonic or interval power they please, without reference to its *name*. In a word, being already musicians, they put tonality *into* these syllables, but never apprehend it *through* them. But the untrained mass cannot do that. What they require initially is to associate the mental effect of all the intervals of the natural scale of music with certain sounds, and then practically apply these sounds to the staff. The elements of duration, accent, and fixed pitch of tone can surely be as easily learned through the medium of minim, crotchet, and quaver, etc., as through dots, commas, dashes, and letters. If so, the supplying by mnemonic syllables tonality or key-relationship to the staff is the only desideratum. But the want of a perfectly pictorial power in notating absolute tonality—the great and chief defect of the staff notation—is more than supplied by having the sol-fa syllables on the moveable do principle added to its notes. And I know of no better illustration of this "accomplished fact" than that furnished by a little monthly called the *Quaver*, in which will be found sheets of music printed in the staff notation, in its entirety, with the mnemonic and tonic powers of the new notation superadded. It is evident, therefore, that tonic sol-faism as a notation is quite unnecessary, and a redundancy that the rising generation may well rid themselves of.

3. ABSOLUTELY ARBITRARY. If a scale language be necessary both as a reading power and voice developer, "Why (it has been asked) employ the antique syllables *do, re, mi, etc.*?" Doubtless they are unique in their history, and have age and honour on their side. But why not adopt a method having its basis in the most normal and musical resonances of the human voice—a method at once nature's scale mnemonics, and the only normal and musical voice developers possible? For tonic sol-faism in itself is not a perfectly defensible nomenclature for interval

reminders and voice developers. It is confessedly most arbitrary (see Curwen's "Teacher's Manual," page 88), and has no foundation beyond the caprice of the will. In proof of this, reference need only be made to the following fact. Guido by accident chose the first syllables of each line of a Latin hymn. His mnemonics were *ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la*—only six, but used by him in a certain way. *Ut*, however, was afterwards discarded, and *do* put in its place, a most arbitrary and unscientific change, evidently. For it so happens that the initial letter of *ut* (as pronounced by the Italians) is indeed nature's tonic in perfect form, and consequently should never have been changed for any other vowel. Then a "seventh syllable (*si*) was added." Then *si* was changed to *ti*, in order to obtain a different initial for each sol-fa syllable—an "innovation accepted by most" of moveable doists at least. Afterwards Mr. Curwen gave these syllables a more English and slightly more euphonistic and phonetic character by writing them *doh, ray*, etc. Moreover, subsequently to the first employment of the sol-fa syllables by Guido, many other sets were proposed and actually used as improvements upon those of Guido, thus further proving the arbitrariness of sol-faism. There was, for instance, a system called "bebisation" or "labeculation," consisting of the syllables *la, be, ce, di, mi, be, gi*; a system called "bobilation" or "boeculation"—viz., *bo, ce, di, ga, la, mi, ni*, and it is said that "bebisation and bobisation were at war for many years, and much controversy existed as to their respective advantages;" also a system called "damenisation" (*da, me, ni, po, tu, la, be*)! It is, therefore, evident that any inversion of the syllables of "utremisation," etc., would serve the practical purpose quite as well, and be equally theoretically correct. But all these syllables are deficient in their vocal power and variety, besides having no relation whatever to certain fundamental facts in the acoustics of the human voice. What is wanted for vocalists is a natural vowel scale by means of which they may simultaneously notate and express the intervals of the musical scale, and develop at least seven different resonances of the voice from the smallest to the largest possible.

A word *en passant* about fixed doism. Possibly many of your readers are both willing and able to prove that this system of naming the intervals of the musical scale is one of the greatest anomalies in musical nomenclature possible, and that it is both theoretically false and unnecessary, and practically vastly inferior to moveable doism. For the question with many is not "Is it theoretically correct and consistent for a moveable doist to chromatically change from the tonic to the dominant, subdominant, and their respective

relative minors, and perhaps even to the tonic minor"—because these modulations without altering the name of the original tonic may be practically at least, if not theoretically, justified? But the question is "Why should *do* be fixed to the absolute pitch of C, when perhaps the piece of music commences in the key of D flat or G flat?" Why not alter *chromatically* from these keys to any related key that may be introduced, and not from such an arbitrarily fixed key as C to all others? If such a method of teaching were once established, and once decreed to be taught in schools, it is not too much to say that many would feel that the obsolete *horribile decretum* of theology had been transferred to music. I trust, also, that this subject will be thoroughly discussed.

Yours truly,  
"JUSTITIA."

Edinburgh, July 18th, 1881.

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24	Now to him who can uphold us		
31	The ear h is the Lord's		
71	Hallelujah ! the Lord reigneth		
75	Blessed be the Lord		
	Great and marvellous		
130	God be merciful unto us and bless us		
131	Deus Misericatur		
138	Give ear to my words		
24	Come unto me all ye that labour	American.	
39	Walk about Zion	Brabury.	
43	He shall come down like rain	Portugallo.	
43	Blessed are those servants	J. J. S. Bird.	
43	Enter not into judgment	Do.	
60	But in the last days	Mison.	
64	Great is the Lord	American.	
64	Arise, O Lord, into thy rest	Do.	
69	Awake, awake, put on thy strength	Burgis.	
77	Grant, we beseech thee, merciful Lord	Callcott.	
84	I will arise and go to my father	Ce. il.	
85	Blessed are the people	American.	
85	I was glad when they said unto me	Callcott.	
129	Blessed are the poor in spirit	Nasemann.	
136	O Lord, we praise thee	Mozart.	
136	The Lord's prayer	Denman.	
140	O praise the Lord	Weddon.	
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107	A thousand miles from land	Root	Song should breathe. <i>Colville</i> . When thy lone heart. <i>Colville</i> . The hardy sailor braves. <i>Arnold</i>
	The rising storm	Czapek	
	The tempest	Whitaker	
108	Prayer in the storm	Himmel	115 The Junior Course
	Morn on the waters	Czapek	to
	Ship ahoy	Moore	120 Letter-note Method.
	Land ho	G. J. Webbe	
	The heaving of the lead	Shield	121 Night's shade no longer ( <i>Moses</i> )
	Home at last	Storage	Awake the song of merry greeting
109	While all is hushed	Kreutzer	122 Sweet evening hour
	Hark, the Goddess Diana	Spofforth	Fairy glee
	The morn unbars the gates of light	Davy	123 The time for singing
	Old Towler	Shield	May morning
110	Practice in Simple Time		When from the east
111	Practice in Compound Time		Lay by employment
112	(In preparation).		Hither, friends and neighbours
113	Exercises in Modulation		Now pluck the verdant oaken leaf
114	Studies in Modulation, 9 part-songs, etc.:		124 Cornish May-song
	Round for 4 v. <i>Colville</i> . That setting sun. <i>Graun</i>		Gather your rosebuds
	How doth fond memory. <i>Pleyel</i> . A voice is in the western. <i>Colville</i> . See how beneath the. <i>Eberwein</i>		Lo, country sport
	All under the leafy. <i>Reeves</i> . Mustapha. <i>Reeves</i>		Queen of May
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The name and address of the Sender must accompany all Correspondence.

The Quaver,

September 1st, 1881.

Teachers of the Letter-note Method are respectfully urged to send us from time to time full information respecting their work.

### The Education Code.

THE new regulations of the Education Code (as announced in the House of Commons on August 8th) will award the full grant (1s. per head) where sight-singing is taught, but 6d. only in case of ear-singing. This is a step in the right direction, and one which sooner or later will revolutionize the music of schools. At first, no doubt, the new arrangement will involve a little more labour on the part of some teachers, but this will be amply compensated by the additional results; and, moreover, when matters have got into working order, there will be a real and great saving of labour. Probably the advantages of sight-singing as compared with ear-singing are known and admitted by all engaged in the work of tuition. It is not, however, generally admitted (or at all events the principle is not invariably acted upon) that training to sing by ear is not only an inferior process to that

of sight-singing, not only useless for the purposes of education, but also positively injurious to those who are thus taught. For although ear and voice can to some extent be trained by this means, bad habits are acquired—the habit, for instance, of learning a tune by rote—and these habits have to be conquered if at any future time the work of learning to sing at sight is attempted. As a general rule we have always found, that they who had been ground most persistently in ear-singing were the hardest to teach sight-singing (supposing no natural impediment in either pupil), and the hardest of all were those who had made considerable progress in their musical studies (being members of choral societies, pianists, etc.) but whose practice was that of ear-singing only. The reason is evident: as stated above, the habits of the ear-singer militate against those of the sight-singer, and the more confirmed the former the greater the difficulty of acquiring the latter.

Granting these facts, every Preceptor will see that duty and interest lie in the direction of sight-singing—duty both to himself and his pupils, because they have a right to expect the best kind of tuition; and interest, because this latter evidently hangs upon the fulfilment of the former.

We shall, therefore, suppose that every reader agrees with us thus far. Differences of opinion may, however, exist as to whether training to sing at sight is always as possible or even as convenient as ear-singing; and we shall now endeavour to show that it is equally possible and equally convenient, as well as vastly more expedient. Suppose a class of ear-singers, trained two hours a week for a school term, during which time they have, by dint of persevering effort, committed to memory a dozen tunes. It will be seen at once that the learning of these twelve tunes does not in the least help them to learn another twelve, on the contrary the same labour has to be undergone again and again as often as a new tune has to be learnt. Now, the labour thus misspent would, if properly directed, have enabled the pupils not only to commit to memory those same twelve tunes, but to acquire in addition some small degree of the sight-singing art, and to

form, to some extent, good sight-singing habits. This for a single term: but when we consider the ear-singing as going on term after term for years, the amount of labour involved by such a process, if methodically pursued, would have resulted in first rate sight-singing results.

But some will object, that with the multiplicity of subjects taught there really is not time to give a pupil solo-singing, style, and finish, and teach him sight-singing as well. Possibly there is not time during one term, or even two or three; but unquestionably there is abundant time during the years usually devoted to education; and, moreover (if we are right in our estimate of the com-

parative ease of teaching both methods), it is evident that the system of ear-singing will in the aggregate involve much greater expenditure of time. Rather, is not such an objection as unreasonable as to argue that there is no time to teach English reading as well as elocution, and therefore the former ought to be shelved, and the words should be spooned into the pupils' memories by rote? Will not the wise preceptor take care to teach the elements of musical as well as literary reading at the proper period, adopting due precautions to ensure that the elementary processes shall be preliminary and helpful to the higher?

## SINGING AT SIGHT ON THE LETTER-NOTE METHOD.

**M**R. J. ADLEY, Teacher of Singing on the Letter-note Method, The Park, Tottenham, London, assisted by Miss Francis Smith (1st class Society of Arts Certificate for Pianoforte and Singing), visits St. John's Wood, Ealing, Brentford, Isleworth, Kingston on Thames, Clapham, Blackheath, Lewisham, Norwood, Woodford, Edmonton, etc.

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## The Human Vocal System.

By "VOX HUMANA."

(Continued from page 241.)

THE PHARYNGEAL CAVITY is the *First Resonator* of the human voice. It is simply the *throat cavity*, and may be defined as extending from the lips of the glottis—the *point* where the vibration of air-particles commences, or sound is generated—to the balance of the Soft Palate—the *central divider* and yet uniter of the three voice-cavities. Its grand function, as one of the three variable resonators, is to re-vibrate, reflect, or reinforce, and give different and distinct forms and sizes to simple sound-waves, immediately after their having been generated in the larynx. The pharyngeal reflector of voice, therefore, instantly succeeds (both in the order of nature and time) the laryngeal generator. It, perhaps, more than any of the voice resonators, wonderfully softens, enriches, and beautifies the tones of the voice. But in order that it may attain to its *maximum resonance* consistent with the amplitude of the vowel pronounced, the soft palate must not only be adequately raised and balanced, but the muscles of the throat must be well distended, and the utmost care taken that there be no contracting or squeezing of these while attempting to produce high notes. For, if the throat cavity be not opened as freely and as widely as possible, the pharyngeal resonance will inevitably lose its distinctive softness, fulness, and brilliancy, all its vowel-forms will become minimised, and their quality much deteriorated. Witness, for instance, the *vocal efforts* of the so-called "throaty singer"—which means, a singer who *misuses* the first, if not the best, *Voice Reflector* which Nature has given him—in his stifling, choking, and necessarily abortive attempts to squeeze out his higher notes by the sheer muscular exertion of his lungs and throat, and oft times face. Nothing, however, can be more inartistic in the vocalist, who ought to know that if he cannot reach a given pitch by the *delicate yet definite tension-degree strokes, springs, and glides of his vocal cords*, and the *balancing of the*

*threefold resoundings of his vocal cavities*, no extra forcing will ever appear graceful to himself, or pleasing to the eye and ear of the hearer. We premise, therefore, that *each voice cavity must be fully resonated*, and must reflect each vowel-sound *simultaneously and in equilibrium*.

There is, however, a charming *Acoustic Illusion* in connection with the production of vowels, which it may be well here to notice and explain. For, although in the *Acoustics of the voice*, it is a fundamental physical law that the focal point of all pure and strictly musical vowels is the *centre of the Resounding Apparatus*, yet the acoustic effect as apprehended by the ear is as if each vowel had a different focal point of its own, and could only be properly produced by being focalized at some particular point between the back of the throat and the lips of the mouth. For example, the *Grand Oval Form of vowel resonance*, Ah, and the *Grand Circular Form*, Au, are heard as if produced entirely in the, throat, and at certain angles from the singer these two sounds seem to come more from the *back of the head or neck* than through the mouth. Again, the *Medium Oval Form*—A (as in *am*), and the *Medium Circular Form*—O, are heard as if resonated near, or striking the palatal dome of the mouth; and the *Least Oval Form*—EE, and the *Least Circular Form*—OO, are heard as if formed very near, or even upon the lips of the mouth.

These different sensations of vowel position, however, are merely *vocal phenomena* revealing an apparent *Coigne of Vantage* for each different vowel, or a point in the *Grand Voice Concavity* where it is phenomenally gathered up in unity, and heard to the greatest possible advantage. It is well also to practically keep this in mind, as the conception of a specific *locale* for each vowel-sound will help the *vocal organs* to balance themselves, and to produce true vowels more readily and accurately. But the important scientific truth is, that these acoustic phenomena and *vocal illusions* constitute the very charms of the human voice, giving it pleasing variety of tone-form, volume, and position. Practically these phenomenal differences are most strikingly noticed during transition by vowel-glide from the largest to the smallest

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resonances or *vice versa*, as from Ah to EE, Ah to OO, etc. Such words as "Time" (tah-eem), "Vow" (yah-oo), "Voice" (vau-ees) are the finest combination of diphthongal beauty and volume possible. They constitute three full-orbed resonances which sweep from the lips of the glottis to the lips of the mouth, through all the vaults and domes of the vocal apparatus from their largest to their least resounding capacities, thereby exhausting the possibility of greater tone substance or vowel resonance. Hence the superb beauty of the three diphthongs "I" (ah-ee), "Ow" (ah-oo), "Oi" (au-ee). They are absolutely unique in their form and size, and cannot be surpassed by the human vocal organs in any language. They are the grandest, fullest, finest, and most powerful vowel coalescence that can be produced, and no voice can ever be strictly full-orbed or rotund in its pronunciation which does not well use them. And why so? Because these diphthongs possess as their accented and main element, Nature's two most beautiful *Pharyngeal Vowels*—Ah and Au.

The physical basis, however, of all vowels whether single or double, is simply the vibration of an air-wave or column of air by the vocal cords in the larynx, and the immediate re-vibration or reflection of the same by the delicate tissues of the mucous lining of the throat, nose, and mouth. The apparent different position of each vowel, therefore, according to the amplitude of its form, constitutes but the ever-varying and variegated, enchanting *Acoustic Mirage* which necessarily attends all musical and fully developed vowelizing or voicing.

But what is the exact physical cause of these vowel illusions? We submit that the law which governs these is as follows: *The greater the amplitude or size of any given vowel-form, the further backward in the resonating cavities is it apparently produced; while the lesser the amplitude or size of any given vowel-form, the further forward is it apparently produced.* The phenomenal position of a Vowel, therefore, from the mouth to the throat, is in exact ratio to its amplitude. According to this law Ah and Au may be called *pharyngeals* or most backward vowels; EE and OO, *labials*, or most forward vowels, A and O *palatals*, or cen-

tral vowels, and all other vowels must occupy a position between. The so-called "throwing forward of the voice" or forward position of *all the vowels* is not only physically but phonologically impossible. For Ah and Au are or should be always heard as pronounced deeply or furthest down the throat, while EE and OO, are the smallest, thinnest, and apparently most forward vowels that can be pronounced. It is therefore that Voice Trainers are by no means unanimous as to either the *nature* or *number* of the vowels that should be initially and specially practised by the learner. Some recommend Ah, because of its brilliancy; others O, because it is "sombre;" others OO, because it is "soft," and "forward," while others give three, four, and five. Now there can be no doubt that Ah and Au, by the very necessity of their respective form and amplitude, are the two initial voice developers of nature. They are the grandest forms of two distinct series of vowels, and possess an "opening power" which prepares the way for all others. But they are not enough. How many different vowels, then, should be used? Just as many, we think, as would form a complete *cycle of the seven most normal and most musical resonances of the voice-cavities*. For, as the only absolutely true and complete *cycle of tonality* is the Octave, so the only absolutely true and complete *cycle of vowel-resonance* are the Seven Vowels between OO and EE inclusive, which form a veritable Vowel Scale corresponding in its whispered pitch to a fixed Diatonic Scale.

From these principles we deduce the following three voice training lessons which we believe to be exhaustive in its practicability as a Universal Voice Developer.

1st. Practise each of the Oval Series of vowels in scale exercises, commencing always with Ah, thus, Ah; Am; A; EE.

2nd. Practise each of the Circular Series of vowels in scale exercises, commencing always with Au, thus, Au; O; OO.

3rd. Unite the Oval and Circular Series in one Cycle upon each note of the exercise, commencing always with OO, thus, OO; O; Au; Ah; Am; A; EE.

*(To be continued.)*

## Personal Reminiscences of Mendelssohn.

**I**N the year 1847 I chanced to be in Dresden, one of the loveliest and most tranquil capitals in Europe. Its grey and respectable look in every portion of it, from the Zwinger Palace to its extremest suburb, augurs its old age. Paris and London wear tolerably well—that is to say, they paint, and they patch, and they lace, and they squeeze into an assumed juvenility. But Dresden really was exceedingly respectable. Alas! is it so now? At the time I have mentioned, and indeed almost at all times, Dresden has been essentially the reposing-place of talent. Gutzkow, the dramatist—I have heard him called the "Scribe of Germany," and very certainly he deserves the name as far as it would be possible for any German to merit it—Horn, the Bohemian poet, my *du-bruder* Geibel, Hans Christian Andersen, the Dane, and scores of others, were there. Painters and sculptors abounded. The king, as are almost all the German princes, was a patron of art so far as his means would allow him; and the Dresden Gallery is one of the finest resorts for the student in the whole of central Europe. English talent was there very homeopathically represented. Myself and Sir Wm. Don, who was at that time residing in the Russian Palace in the Moritz Strasse, were its only representatives.

With Geibel chance made me peculiarly intimate. A singular circumstance, which there is no necessity for my relating here, had commenced our acquaintanceship. He did me the honour of seeing what he fancied was genius in myself: I need not say whether I coincided with him or not. Personal vanity perchance induced me to concur with his flattering opinion. The result of it was that we became bosom friends. We drank the *du-burdershaft* cup together. He kissed my left cheek, and I kissed his, in the enthusiasm of our affection for each other, and two bottles of *Liebfraumilch*. What more was there to be done?

Geibel was a true German poet. He lived in a dreamland of his own. He read me portions of his "Judas Iscariot," a mystery, as he named it, which he was then writing—rambled with me up the Elbe—took a week's turn with me through the Saxon Switzerland, and finally confided to me, as a secret which he had told to none other that he had been engaged in writing the *libretto* to an opera which was then in the hands of Mendelssohn. Two acts of this were nearly completed.

"Could I but hear them!" I exclaimed.

"You shall, my brother!" said Geibel. "In a week he will be here. He has written to me to say that he will remain two days. One evening is to be devoted to me. He will play over all which he has already written. It is, of course, for the benefit of my opinion." He said this very gravely. There is no German who does not fancy himself a complete and accomplished musical critic. "You shall visit him with me."

It was accordingly in a week or more subsequent to this that Geibel came into my room at the Hotel de Ravière, radiant with delight.

"Mendelssohn is here," he cried, as soon as he saw me. "He arrived early this morning. He has sent me a note to ask me to call upon him at seven o'clock this evening. I am now come to dine with you. We will go together.

The composer was tarrying in the same hotel in which I was staying. But at dinner we did not see him. He was fatigued with his journey. No one but an American knows how to travel. With him it is an inborn capacity. He feels no fatigue and experiences no weariness in it. Mendelssohn had only left Berlin on the preceding evening. Geibel and myself spent the noon together. At half-past six I asked him whether I should change my dress?

"For what purpose?" he enquired.

"He is a perfect stranger to me," I replied.

"What if he is?" was the answer. "Are you not my friend *du-bruder*?"

Consequently, as the hour of seven was sounding from the Cathedral, a waiter preceded us to the door of Mendelssohn's apartment.

"Komm herein," responded a sad but remarkably agreeable voice as the waiter knocked at the door. He opened it, and in another instant I stood in the presence of Mendelssohn. For a moment he was engrossed in the usual courtesy attendant upon the meeting of two friends. Then he turned to me.

"This is Herr von Q——," answered Geibel (I never met a German who did not attach this aristocratic prefix to my name) to the look of enquiry which Mendelssohn very evidently intended as a question. "He is an Englishman, and a very dear friend of mine. May I trust his presence will not annoy you."

"Herr von Q——," repeated the composer. It immediately struck me that he was endeavouring to recall the name, and re-trace the circumstances under which he had heard it. I volunteered to assist him.

"I was formerly the musical critic, and am at present a travelling *attaché* to the——." I named the journal which had the benefit of my musical services, as I said this.

"Ah! I remember your name. I thought that I did. I have been indebted to you for many an article whose praise far surpassed my poor merits."

It was at once clear to me that Mendelssohn relished flattery. Where is that talent to be found which does not do so?

"Nay! that would be impossible," was my reply. The inflection of the tone of voice with which this was uttered was, I need scarcely say, intended to convey the impression that I felt what I was saying.

He now shook hands with me very warmly, despite a certain restraint in his manner which appeared to be habitual to him, and we then sat down. Time was then afforded me to examine him, and I availed myself of it. Frequently as I had seen him before, never yet had the opportunity been given me of watching his face when he was in familiar conversation with a friend. Bartholdy Mendelssohn was in every respect an eminently intellectual-looking individual. That restraint which I have alluded to in his manner, combined with the serene tranquillity of his countenance, gave me the impression of a man who was both singularly reserved in the expression of his thoughts, and of a placid and most even temperament. Naturally, I am unable positively to say whether this was the case or not, as the occasion that I am now referring to proved to be the only one which I ever had of passing any time in company with him. His mild eye seemed filled with a tranquil depth of meaning which may be rarely seen in an English and still more rarely in a French eye. It is distinctly the natural characteristic of the German race. His manners were quiet and coldly gentle, save when he played, which he subsequently did. Then his eyes lit (they did not flash) with a severe and lofty enthusiasm which it would be impossible for words to convey any idea of.

(To be continued.)

A congress of musicians assembled in connection with the Milan Exhibition, has recently concluded its labours. The following is a *resume* of the resolutions arrived at:—"Adoption in orchestras of contrabasses with four strings, preserving, however, a certain number of contrabasses with three strings. Obligation on students of the horn to practise on the natural horn—that is to say, without pistons. Obligation on pupils for the trumpet to study on the E-flat trumpet. They to be strictly forbidden to replace this trumpet in orchestras with the cornet-a-pistons. Adoption of trombones of diverse types. Adoption of the French diapason." The Italians do not, however, seem to set much value on the

Milan congress, for the Municipality of Rome have just issued orders that in the public schools a diapason should be used in which  $A=450$  vibrations. The French pitch is of course about  $A=435$ .—*Figaro*.

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## THE LETTER-NOTE METHOD.



LETTER-NOTE appends to the ordinary staff notation the sol-fa initials, on a principle identical with that adopted in former years by Waite's figure method, and at the present time by the Tonic Sol-fa and Chevé methods. Experience has shown that as sight-singing pupils have to undergo two distinct processes—1st, that of cultivating the faculty of tune, and training the ear to recognise the tonality of the sounds; and 2nd, of acquiring a practical acquaintance with the symbols and characters used in musical notation—it is expedient to give the learner some educational aid in acquiring the former while the latter is being studied. Accordingly most of the methods in use at the present time either discard the staff altogether, or else add thereto during the earlier stages certain contrivances for the help of the pupil; the latter is the plan adopted and advocated by Letter-note.

The advantages claimed for Letter-note are, that the power of reading music thus printed is acquired by young pupils quite as easily as either of the new notations; and, once this degree of proficiency is attained, a very slight effort is needed in order to dispense with the aid of the sol-fa initials—so slight, in fact, that young persons often accomplish it of their own accord, without help from their teacher. Further, the notation learned first is that which is likely to remain most familiar and easy, simply because it is learned first; and Letter-note secures the advantage that the student uses the staff-notation from the very commencement of his reading lessons.

The following specimens will show the nature of Letter-note:—

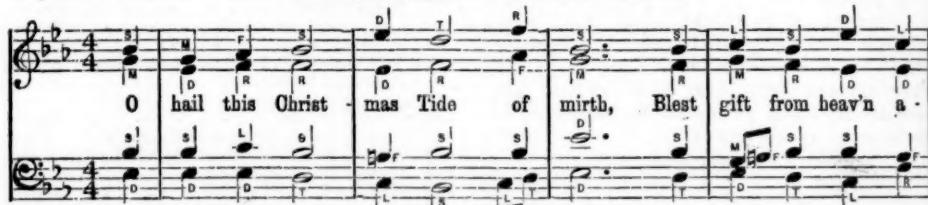


God save our gra - cious Queen, Long live our no - ble Queen, God save the



Queen. Send her vic - to - ri - ons, Hap - py and glo - ri - ons,  
The above are the modes of printing adopted at the commencement, at which stage the pupil needs bold and legible symbols and initial letters.

After progress has been made, when the reader is able to depend more upon the notes and uses the letter only when he is in doubt, it is found possible to reduce the size of type, and also to print the music in condensed score, without inconvenience through the multiplicity of signs—an arrangement which renders Letter-note music "as cheap as the cheapest, and as easy as the easiest." The following is a specimen of condensed score:—



These advantages, together with a very careful graduation of the lessons, will, it is hoped, render the elementary text-books useful to all engaged in the work of music-teaching. At present these training-books are well and favourably known in many of the better class seminaries of the Metropolis; the method is also extensively used in evening classes at Birmingham and other large towns.

For the guidance of teachers in making their selections, it is expedient to explain that Letter-note works adopt two distinct methods of teaching, and may be classified thus:—

The Letter-note Singing Method and Choral Guide } In these works every note through-  
The Junior Course } out carries its sol-fa initial, and they  
The Choral Primer Letter-note School Music. } can be used by the very youngest  
The Penny Educators } pupil.

The Graduated Course and Pupil's Handbook } The Sol-fa initials are here gradually  
The Elementary Singing Master and Elementary } withdrawn, and these books can be used  
Singing School } to best advantage by senior scholars or adults.

I believe I was one of the very first teachers to take up the Letter-note method in the country, and certainly can claim to be the first to teach the system in the Midlands; and now, after 20 years' experience, am able to say I am more than ever convinced that it is by far the best method of teaching to sing at sight. It embodies all the best points of the Sol-fa method, and from the earliest stages pupils are accustomed to sing from the universal notation.

*Erdington, Birmingham, May 21st, 1880.*

THOMAS G. LOCKER,  
*Conductor of Perry Barr Choral Society, Sutton Coldfield Philharmonic Society  
Camphill Amateur Musical Society, Birmingham Musical Union, etc.*

I have much pleasure in stating that I have used the Letter-note method for 10 years in Schools and Collegiate Seminaries, giving an average of 20 lessons per week, and after trying most other systems I am quite convinced the Letter-note is decidedly the best. The text-books are systematic and thorough; my pupils are very much interested in their lessons, make rapid progress, and soon learn to sing at sight from the established Notation. I have a large number of letters from Principals of Schools, expressing themselves highly pleased with the Letter-note method.

*The Park, Tottenham, London, Nov. 2nd, 1880.*

JOHN ADLEY.

I cordially welcome any measures that may facilitate the reading of Choral Music by the masses, and am of opinion that the Letter-note method is well calculated to that end. It combines the principles of the ordinary Tonic Sol-fa system with those of the Staff notation, and disposes of some of the objections which have been urged against the former.

*London, Nov. 6th, 1880.*

CHARLES E. STEPHENS, *Hon. Mem. R.A.M.*

With pleasure I testify that the specimens of the Letter-note method obligingly forwarded are clear, practical and useful. The method has too a special value, as standing in an explanatory attitude between the Stave notation and Tonic Sol-fa method, and so being of assistance to students of either principle.

*London, Nov. 10th, 1880.*

E. H. TURPIN,

*Hon. Sec. and Member of Board of Examiners, College of Organists;  
Examiner, College of Preceptors; etc.*

I am sure your system is an additional facility to the teaching of sight-singing.

*London, Nov. 17th, 1880.*

EDWIN M. LOTT,

*Visiting Examiner, Trinity College, London.*

I am happy to say I think the Letter-note system is likely to be of great benefit to the Choral Societies and Classes in which I am introducing it. I can give no better testimonial than the fact of my having adopted it everywhere.

*Dollar, Dec. 15th, 1880.*

JAMES M'HARDY.

I have much pleasure in stating that the Letter-note method has been adopted by a Class in Birmingham of nearly 200 members, of which I am the Teacher, and I consider the method excellent.

*Birmingham, Dec. 16th, 1880.*

ALFRED R. GAUL, Mus. Bac. Cantab.,

*Professor of Harmony and Singing at the Midland Institute.*

Your system, I feel quite sure, is an admirable one.

*Birmingham, January 3rd, 1881.*

C. SWINNERTON HEAP, Mus. Doc. Cantab.,

*Conductor of the Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent,  
Walsall, Stafford, and Stone Philharmonic Societies.*

The undermentioned gentlemen have kindly signified their approval of the method in the following terms:—

“We are quite of opinion that the Letter-note Method is well calculated to produce good results in training to sing at sight.”

W. S. BAMBRIDGE, Esq., Mus. Bac. Oxon., *Professor of Music at Marlborough College.*

EDMUND T. CHIPP, Esq., Mus. Doc. Cantab., *Organist of Ely Cathedral.*

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